



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## Strategic Plan For Fiscal Years 2005-10

### INITIATIVES

#### Initiative: **Kids**

*“Improve opportunities for children”*

#### Discussion

The County of San Diego is committed to improving opportunities and outcomes for children. Our vision is for children to be healthy, to be cared for and protected, and to reach their full potential.

#### **Making Sure Children Are Healthy**

The County provides many programs and services to ensure that children are healthy, including physical and behavioral health care, and recreational facilities and activities. Many childhood health and behavior problems can lead to life-long consequences. Among the critical problems facing our children are childhood obesity, inadequate access to healthcare, and low birth weight.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 15% of children and adolescents in the U.S. are overweight.<sup>2</sup> This prevalence has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past two decades.<sup>3</sup> Risk factors for overweight or obese children include high cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased incidence of Type 2 diabetes, and a 70% to 80% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.<sup>4</sup> The causes of being overweight in children and adolescents include lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, genetics, and lifestyle. The County is committed to promoting healthy eating habits and lifestyles for families and children.

The County promotes enrollment of needy children in public health insurance programs like Medi-Cal and Healthy Families. With health insurance coverage, children have access to preventive clinic visits, making early illness detection and treatment possible. Immunization of children is also a concern; children not properly immunized by age 2 risk getting preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps, and polio.

Low birth weight is considered an important national and community health status indicator. Occurring at a disproportionately high rate in certain San Diego County communities, low birth weight is associated with long-term disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, vision and hearing impairments, and other developmental disabilities. Reducing the number of infants born with low birth weight will help prevent lifelong disabilities.

#### **Making Sure Our Children Are Cared For And Protected**

The County recognizes that helping families is an effective way to make sure children are safe and secure. That's why the County provides a wide array of information and support services for families, like Critical Hours after-school care and counseling services.

<sup>2</sup> *Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999-2000*, National Center for Health Statistics, accessed 6 December 2002; available from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/overwght99.htm>

<sup>3</sup> *The Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, released 13 December 2001, accessed 6 December 2002; available from [http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact\\_adolescents.htm](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_adolescents.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

While helping families is often the best way to help children, there will always be children who require the attention of our juvenile court and child protective systems. Protecting children from abuse and neglect is a top priority. When necessary, the County will intervene to help children impacted by families in crisis. Ensuring that children in the foster care system can become productive, self-sufficient adults is also critical. When possible, foster children will be provided opportunities to remain in their communities. In addition, foster children will have a greater chance to succeed through unique opportunities like the San Pasqual Academy, an innovative residential education facility that offers foster youth a caring home where they can learn academic, social, and life skills.

There is growing awareness of domestic violence as a national problem that exacts a terrible toll on children, families, and communities. While the County has experienced reductions in overall crime rates over the last few years, the reported rate of domestic violence incidents does not appear to be declining. In addition to the injuries and fatalities that result, domestic violence has severe long-term consequences. Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to experience health, emotional, and behavioral problems, and become victims or perpetrators of violence. The County's commitment to reduce both the incidences and causes of domestic violence must be sustained.

Poverty is another problem affecting children. The County helps children by helping families transition from welfare to work, linking them to jobs, ensuring payment of court-ordered child support, and providing support services, such as training opportunities, housing assistance, and public transportation. The County also provides information and support services aimed at increasing families' financial literacy so that they can better manage their money and increase their prospects for providing a better quality of life for their children.

### **Helping Our Children Reach Their Full Potential**

Children who succeed in school are better equipped to succeed in life. In partnership with school districts throughout the region, the County has increased efforts to combat school truancy. Since school violence affects children's ability to learn by interfering with their sense of security, the County has also partnered with schools and communities to focus on violence prevention.

The hours before the school day begins and after it ends – hours when parents are often at work – are also critical to childhood development. The County will continue to support programs that focus on enhancing learning through homework assistance and developing healthy behaviors through positive recreational activities.

To prepare children for the challenges and opportunities of information technology, we continue to work to narrow the digital divide and ensure access to information through our libraries and innovative projects that bring the Internet to County residents and communities without access.

### **Initiative Objectives**

1. Encourage healthy behaviors and address children's health issues to help ensure healthy adulthood.
2. Link eligible needy children to no-cost and low-cost healthcare coverage.
3. Provide quality care and supportive services for at-risk youth and children in the dependency system to create a nurturing environment that enables and encourages them to succeed.
4. Address and prevent the harmful effects on youth of exposure to violence.
5. Support families with children as they transition from welfare to work and seek self-sufficiency.
6. Create enriching experiences to engage youth and their families in activities that will help them reach their full potential as adults.

**Initiative:**     **The Environment**

*“Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life, and economic development”*

**Discussion**

How we use our natural resources dramatically affects our environment, our quality of life, and our economic prosperity. Environmental preservation is imperative – we must ensure a livable environment, helping to sustain and enhance the land, water, air, and biodiversity upon which all life depends. At the same time, we must recognize that our population is growing rapidly. Sustaining our quality of life and economic vitality demands that we balance our responsibility to preserve environmental resources with our obligation to meet San Diego County’s growth needs.

**Safeguarding Our Environment and Quality of Life**

The County acknowledges the need to preserve open space, which provides recreation opportunities and raw materials, shelters wildlife, and naturally purifies air and water. We continue to support the most ambitious habitat conservation plan ever undertaken in the U.S. – the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). Part of what makes the MSCP so ambitious is that it’s designed to anticipate and accommodate growth. The MSCP is not just good for the environment, but also balances preservation imperatives with our commitment to housing and economic development needs.

Applying the same balanced philosophy, we recognize that mandate alone is not the way to achieve clean water. Effective strategies must be based on education and cooperation, enabling County residents to become partners in efforts to ensure clean water. Through Project Clean Water, the County has pulled together the stakeholders, resources, and information necessary to create a consensus approach with shared goals and responsibilities for water quality management in the region.

We know that clean air is not just a matter of standards and statistics – it’s about health and quality of life for our citizens. Even as the County leads implementation of federal and state regulations, we also continue to heed air quality concerns that directly affect the neighborhoods where we live.

**Encouraging Responsible Development**

While the County acts to protect environmental resources and biodiversity, we also have a responsibility to meet the quality of life needs of our rapidly growing population. Reconciling these competing interests requires innovative growth solutions that address a full spectrum of issues, including housing, transportation, community infrastructure, and environmental impact. The County must encourage and enable responsible development that addresses both growth and environmental needs. We will continue to lead development of solutions to our region’s pressing growth issues, and will promote progressive cooperation between development and environmental concerns.

**Initiative Objectives**

1. Implement habitat conservation programs.
2. Develop and implement land use planning strategies that address the issues, needs, and concerns of both the present and the future.
3. Balance housing, open space preservation, and economic development needs on behalf of residents, taxpayers, and businesses.
4. Implement a strategy to improve the water quality of our streams, rivers, bays, and ocean.
5. Reduce environmental risk through regulation, intergovernmental collaboration, and leveraging public and private resources.
6. Decrease conflict over land use and actively facilitate responsible development.

**Initiative:**     **Safe and Livable Communities**

*“Promote Safe and Livable Communities”*

**Discussion**

Basic safety and security issues are important. Making sure our neighborhoods are safe places to live, work, and play is essential, but promoting livable communities requires much more than just safety. Livable communities are those that provide the environment and amenities necessary for people to prosper, enjoy, and maintain a shared sense of civic pride. We must focus our resources and engage our fellow citizens in efforts to develop and maintain a quality of life that is worth protecting. In short, there must be a balance between preparation for risk and uncertainty, and investment to improve our day-to-day lives. County services will continue to support this balance.

**Strengthening Regional Security and Crime Prevention**

In the wake of both 9/11 and the 2003 wildfires, safety issues have taken on a new and more urgent dimension. The County is committed to addressing residents’ heightened concern regarding personal safety and regional security, particularly with regard to natural disasters and the threat of terror attacks. This commitment includes exercising regional leadership in response preparedness, information sharing, inter-agency cooperation, and coordination of law enforcement, fire fighting, life safety, and medical professionals.

Beyond working to prevent and prepare for a natural disaster or terrorist attack – and working to prevent one – the County will continue to strengthen ordinary crime prevention efforts. Vital to these efforts are partnerships with schools, cities, and community-based organizations. To better ensure public safety, we will continue and expand innovative strategies, such as literacy intervention programs, community oriented policing programs, juvenile truancy prevention, school violence prevention, and multi-agency response to substance abuse . We will also continue efforts to stop domestic violence, which remains a major problem with devastating impacts on victims and families, even as overall crime rates decline. Enhanced efforts will focus on preventing violence, supporting victims, and reducing recidivism.

**Promoting Health & Wellness**

Safe and livable communities require more than just protection from terrorism and crime. Our commitment to livable communities also involves public health and wellness for all County residents. The County encourages healthy behaviors, ensures access to preventive care, detects and treats chronic diseases, and offers access to a full range of health and behavioral health services to our residents who need them, including seniors and those with disabilities. The County will continue to foster an environment that encourages personal, family, and community responsibility for health and self-sufficiency.

**Enhancing Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life**

Challenges to the quality of life that makes San Diego County such a great place to live and visit include livability as well as safety. The County continues its commitment to promoting livable communities on a number of different fronts.

A key component of livable communities is economic opportunity. We must continue to support a diverse economy, allowing our businesses and industry to provide job growth and career opportunities throughout all areas of the County. We must also recognize that helping people is a way to build livable communities. The County will pursue opportunities to create affordable housing and provide assistance to low-income individuals and families. First time home ownership is necessary for our residents to strengthen and stabilize our neighborhoods; nothing makes residents more engaged in their neighborhoods than having an equity stake in their homes.

Community infrastructure amenities such as parks, athletic fields, intergenerational community centers, recreation programs, libraries, and safe schools enrich the quality of life for all residents. It is important to recognize that effective land use strategies not only help us preserve and protect our environment, but also help lay the ground work for safe and livable communities.

### **Initiative Objectives**

1. Increase community residents' accountability for public safety.
2. Address primary contributors to crime, including substance abuse, truancy, illiteracy, and mental health problems.
3. Enhance efforts to stop domestic violence, focusing on prevention, victim support, and reducing recidivism.
4. Improve emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation capabilities for both natural and man-made disasters.
5. Promote the health and well being of adults and seniors.
6. Help residents find safe and affordable housing.
7. Promote wellness and self-sufficiency.
8. Develop techniques to attract businesses to all economic sub-regions of the County.
9. Maintain and expand parks.
10. Expand access to information resources for all residents.
11. Develop and support services, programs, and initiatives that enrich our residents' quality of life.